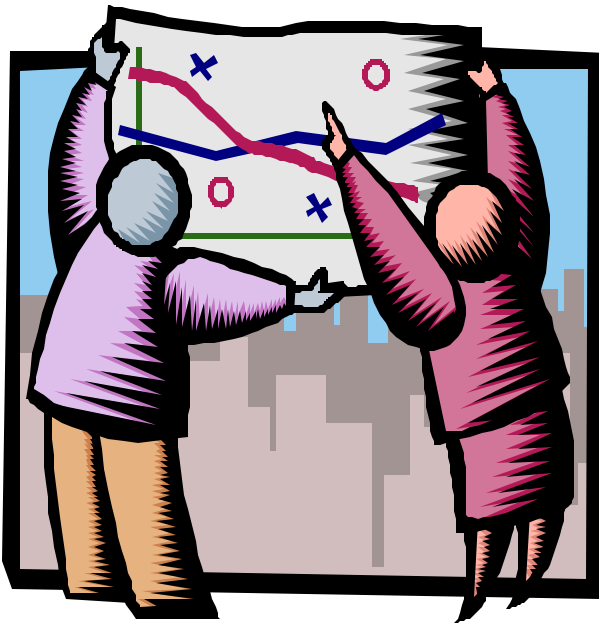# CASE ACTIVITY

7–B

Job Performance Situation 7: Improving Program Quality Through Program Monitoring and Self-Assessment

HEAD START
MOVING AHEAD
COMPETENCY-BASED TRAINING PROGRAM

REFERENCE

This activity presents a type of situation that often confronts Head Start and can involve both local grantee staff and federal staff. It prepares participants to embark on training activities in two skill categories: *leading a Head Start self-assessment or program monitoring* and *planning.* Learners will analyze a hypothetical though lifelike situation Head Start case and will draw on their individual experiences in meeting similar situations.

Related skill activities include 3–D, Decision-Making: Building Consensus; 5–C, Conflict Resolution: Understanding the Elements; 7–C, Program Monitoring and Self-Assessment: Leading a Program Monitoring and Self-Assessment; 7–D, Program Monitoring and Self-Assessment: Collecting Data Using Multiple Modes of Inquiry ; and 7–E, Planning: Using Assessment Data.

Harmony Springs

Outcomes. Participants who complete this activity will be able to

- put themselves in the shoes of other Head Start staff who are grappling with an evaluation question

- consider the challenges presented by a commonly occurring performance situation

- see this situation as an example of taking stock, in which a leader engages others to collect and analyze data and use it in program planning

- assess the role played by the presence or absence of skills in *leading a program monitoring or self-assessment* and in *planning*

Materials. Newsprint and markers

Components

This activity can be done by one person, an informal group, or a formal workshop. We have provided suggested times, but participants and facilitators may wish to adjust these to their own timetables.

Step 1. Handout: Harmony Springs	10 min.
Step 2. Worksheet: Case Questions and Discussion	20 min.
Suggested total time	30 min.

This activity contains 5 pages.

STEP 1. HANDOUT: HARMONY SPRINGS
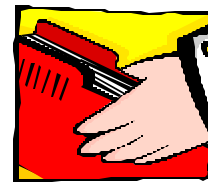
This performance situation provides leaders with the opportunity to enhance their competency in *leading a Head Start self-assessment or program monitoring review* and in using the results in *planning.* As with the other Performance Situations, participants will begin to address these skills areas by examining a hypothetical situation. Although the situation presented in Performance Situation 7 depicts a program at a crossroad, the skills addressed can be generalized to *any* situation in which a leader is involved in self-assessment or program monitoring.

Consider the following:

Harmony Springs

Dolores, the grantee director of a small Head Start program in the Midwest, is on the phone with the program specialist. "We're coming up to our three-year review next year, Russ, and I wanted to talk with you. We had a piece of real unpleasantness the last time, you'll recall!"

"I certainly do. I can assure you that you won't be interacting with that consultant when your review comes up next."

"Well, that is a relief. Now, maybe you have some suggestions that might help us with our annual self-assessment. We're getting ready to do that in March."

"So how are your plans going for that?"

"To be honest, we are feeling pretty overwhelmed by the whole process. We have been trying to design our self-assessment to more closely match the revised federal monitoring system and it hasn't been easy! Approaching this task from a systems-based perspective has been a real challenge for my staff, not to mention the parents and community partners!"

"What kinds of challenges have you faced in making the change?"

"Well, for one thing, it has been very difficult to shift the focus of the process from the small details to the "big picture". We used the OSPRI for many years and most of my staff still view the checklist as their tool of choice. When we changed the process to include more open-ended interview questions, the staff had to make a huge leap of faith. They still doubt their ability to be proficient with the new process and they continually express a fear that they will "miss something". I have to admit that I am also skeptical. Although I truly believe that the systems perspective is best, I'm just not sure that we are ready for this."

Suggested time: 20 min.

Part I (10 min.) Use the following questions to reflect on the case. Question 1 applies only to grantee staff, question 2 to federal staff, and questions 3 and 4 to both. Each participant should take about 10 minutes to answer the questions by himself or herself.

1. Grantee staff: What about this case seems familiar? What potential problems do you see coming up in the program? How will these problems affect areas of the program? How will they affect the program overall?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

2. Federal staff: What about this case seems familiar? What potential problems do you see coming up in the program? What role can a federal staff person play in helping the program director to identify and address these problems?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

3. Both: From your experience, how has the presence—or absence—of skills in *leading a program monitoring or self-assessment* affected day-to-day program operations?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

4. Both: From your experience, how has the presence—or absence—of skills in *planning* affected programs, in both the short term and long term?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Part II (10 min.) If you are working in pairs or a group, take another 10 minutes or so to discuss your answers, why you gave them, and any points of difference.